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INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

NSC FOR MGAVIN, LETIM

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MOPS MARR SU

SUBJECT: U.S. SPECIAL ENVOY GRATION MEETS WITH SAF GENERAL ABDULRAHMAN

REF: KHARTOUM 375

Classified By: CDA Robert E. Whitehead, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a November 3 meeting, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) General Esmat Abdulrahmam told U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, General Scott Gration, that the Government of Sudan (GoS) does not, and never has, supported the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). He also stated that allegations by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) that the SAF is maintaining militias or other armed groups (OAGs) in the south are groundless. Abdulrahman dissembled about the LRA and OAGs, but this was the most open briefing the USG has received from the SAF in many years. End Summary.

GoS Does Not Now and Never Has Supported LRA

¶2. (C) Abdulrahman denied that the GoS supports, or ever did support, the LRA. He emphasized the GoS's history of cooperation with the Government of Uganda (GoU) in combating the LRA and provided documentation of this history in the form of an often renewed cooperation protocol with the GoU, allowing Ugandan forces to enter Sudan in pursuit of the LRA.

Abdulrahman did not speak to the location of LRA leader Joseph Kony or to allegations that Kony has come to Khartoum in recent years.

¶3. (C) Abdulrahman said that no elements of the LRA are in Darfur and that President Omar Al-Bashir has given specific orders that the LRA not be permitted to enter Darfur. He said that the SAF's latest intelligence indicates that elements of the LRA are in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and West Equatoria. He said LRA forces could also be in West Bahr Al Ghazal, but that the SAF's ability to monitor conditions in Southern Sudan is limited. Abdulrahman said that the GoS would like to prevent the LRA from entering the south of Sudan as well, and that GoSS President Salva Kiir had indicated that he might ask the SAF to help close the south's western border to the LRA, but that ultimately nothing was done.

No SAF-aligned OAGs in Southern Sudan

¶4. (C) Abdulrahman stated that GoSS allegations that the SAF is maintaining OAGs in the south are groundless. He noted a report from October 2007 documenting a total of 19,302 SAF-aligned OAG members in southern Sudan. He said that of this total, 9,500 joined the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), 6,000 were absorbed into SAF components of the joint

integrated units (JIUs) stationed in the south, 958 were absorbed as officers into the SAF, and the remainder received the benefit of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program. (Note: This DDR program was not conducted or monitored by the UN, and the possibility remains that the SAF continues to support these remnant OAGs as reserves, as the GoSS frequently claims. End Note.) Abdulrahman said that GoSS allegations in this area continue reoccurring because the GoSS has never accepted the JIUs in the south. He acknowledged that if the south secedes in 2011, these SAF JIU soldiers will need to relocate to northern Sudan or join the SPLA, either of which choices these OAGs may find difficult to accept. He noted that the SAF is currently keeping two of its most controversial former ?_?~}?>Q_~gQgQ_5^onQ?}F7o93.{{?=e?;wQ7ntain forces loyal to them in the south. Tang's arrival in Malakal in February sparked heavy fighting between the SPLA and forces loyal to Tang (Ref A). End Note.)

¶5. (C) Comment. The Sudanese Ministry of Defense has always kept U.S. officials at arm's length, but this was the most open briefing that the USG has received from the SAF in many years. Abdulrahman's loathing of Joseph Kony and the LRA appeared heartfelt, and it is certainly believable that the GoS wishes to keep the LRA out of Darfur. GoSS officials continue to publicly accuse Khartoum of arming OAGs in Southern Sudan. While he dissembled about the LRA and OAGs, this meeting alone is an encouraging sign indicating that the GoS may wish to improve relations with the USG.

WHITEHEAD